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GROWTH WORK WITH

4-H CLUBS

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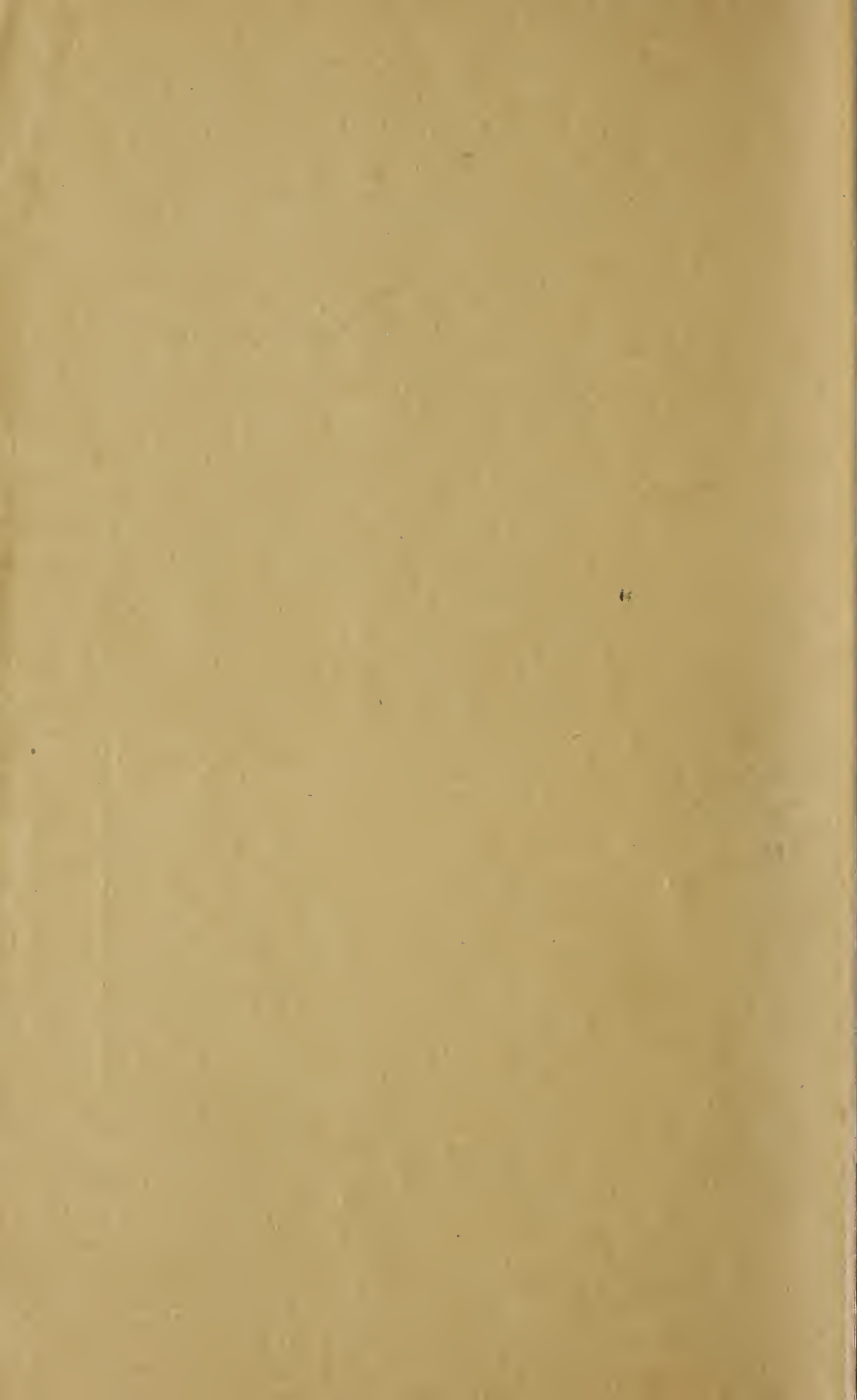


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Extension Service.....C.W. WARBURTON *Director*

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Washington, D. C.



GROWTH WORK WITH BOYS' AND GIRLS' 4-H CLUBS*

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The United States Department of Agriculture is a great research institution - one of the greatest in the world. The Department of Agriculture has widespread regulatory powers, through the authority vested by Congress in the Secretary of Agriculture to administer a large number of acts relating to the Nation's food supply and other matters. But the Department of Agriculture is also a great educational force, linked up with the State agricultural colleges in 48 States and with county appropriating bodies in more than 2,000 rural counties, to carry on through the cooperative extension service in agriculture and home economics under the Smith-Lever Act a system of education for rural men and women and for rural boys and girls, which shall make for better practices in farming and home making, for a more prosperous, more satisfying life in the open country, and for an increasing contribution by rural districts to the material and spiritual welfare of the Nation.

* Read at the annual luncheon of the American Posture League in New York City, March 13, 1926.

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Extension work with rural boys and girls is done through the medium of the 4-H club, whose motto is "To make the best better," whose emblem is the four-leaf clover, and whose dedication is -

I pledge my head to clearer thinking,
My heart to greater loyalty,
My hands to larger service,
And my health to better living
For my home, my community, and my country.

According to the latest figures available at this time, approximately 565,000 boys and girls were thus enrolled during 1925 in voluntary groups and about 329,500 carried the work through to its completion, handing in the records and making the exhibits as specified in the club requirements. These club members ranged from ten to twenty years of age, the majority being probably between twelve and fourteen. They were enrolled in clubs to raise all sorts of agricultural products - beef and dairy cattle, poultry and other livestock, corn, potatoes, vegetables, small fruits, and flowers - and to carry on all sorts of home activities - baking bread, canning vegetables and fruits, preparing meals, making and selecting clothing and hats, improving their own rooms, and beautifying the home grounds. The activities undertaken were guided largely by the agricultural and home conditions in the county or the community, for the purpose of 4-H club work is not merely to develop club boys and girls into thoughtful, self-reliant, capable young farmers and home makers, with the beginning of some profitable enterprise and a bank account to help them through high school or college; neither is it solely to develop future leaders for the rural community who have had close and friendly contacts with the extension service. From the beginning one of the major purposes of boys' and girls' club work has been to make the club



Fig.1.- Poultry club members learning to judge white leghorns under the direction of the county agricultural agent

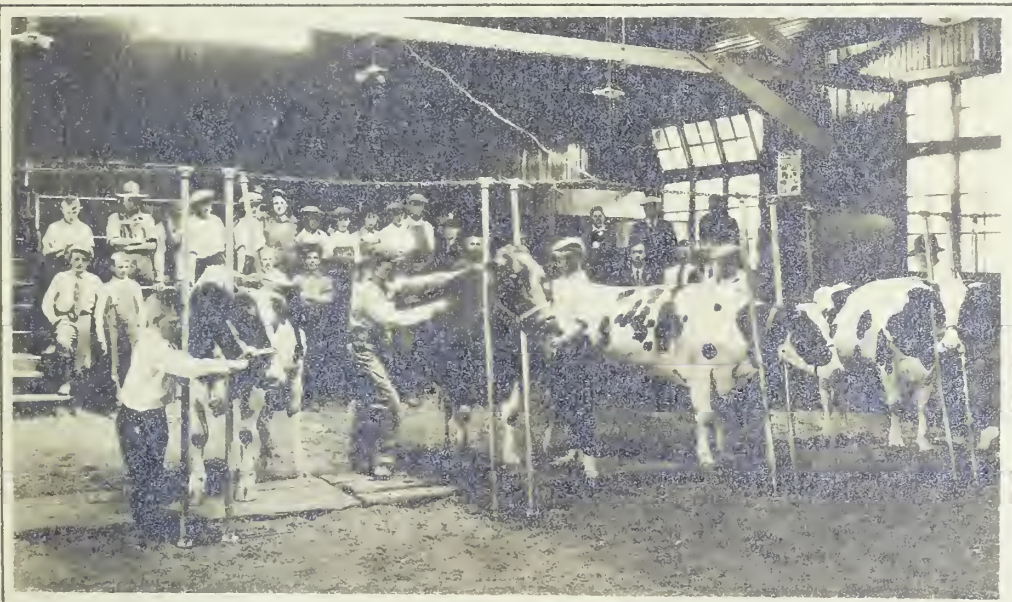


Fig.2. Team of club boys rehearsing for a cattle judging demonstration. They will "place" these animals and explain the reasons for their judgement

members demonstrators of the advantages of better practices, and thus early to give them a part in raising standards in the community.

The 4-H clubs elect their officers from among their own membership and learn to conduct their own meetings, but they are guided and taught by the county extension agent or by a voluntary leader under the direction of the agent, according to a plan worked out at the agricultural college by the State club leaders and the various subject-matter specialists. Thus the livestock specialist at the college helps to plan the work for the pig-club members, and the clothing and the foods specialists respectively help plan the work of the clothing clubs and the meal-preparation clubs. In some States a majority of the local leaders are teachers; in others the leaders are farmers or home makers of ability and standing who are interested in the progress of the rural child.

To me, the most significant feature of the whole system is the fact that from the beginning the club member consciously works toward a standard, and that he learns to judge his own product with reference to that standard. The corn-club member secures seed from a strain selected and tested for performance under local conditions, and raises it in soil prepared, fertilized and tilled in accordance with expert instruction. But the corn-club member not only raises his product by rule and writes an account of his methods; he must learn to select a dozen of the best ears for his exhibit, and must be able to explain and illustrate, in a public demonstration, the points of variety that is most desirable for local seeding, and he must learn to judge his own product with reference to that standard. The poultry-club member starts with purebred fowls, or a setting of purebred eggs, and learns to judge the points of his birds and cull out the undesirables (fig. 1). The bread-club girl learns to judge bread and baked goods, and the

clothing-club girl learns to judge clothing for quality and workmanship and to demonstrate the points of suitability to the wearer, and the like. Standard products are developed through standard practice, and this is followed by exhibiting, judging, and demonstrating the standard to the community (fig. 2). Is it strange that club members become keen, thoughtful, and observant, relating cause and effect with a discrimination often beyond their years?

Four other characteristic club activities should be mentioned because they have a bearing on the subject under discussion: The club achievement day, held at the close of the club year, to which parents and friends are invited; the contest (fig. 3), often culminating at the county or State fair; the county and State short courses, and in many States, the county or State camps (fig. 4), for intensive instruction and for recreation.

I have thus described the activities of the boys' and girls' 4-H clubs conducted through the cooperative extension service, in order to show you the wonderful groundwork we have for a type of health education unique in its approach and far-reaching in its possibilities. This development of the fourth or the "health", H, of the club insignia is what I have called "Growth work."

Up to about five years ago, however, little attention had been paid to the health "H," except in a few States which were working on footwear and on better posture in connection with the girls' clothing clubs. Probably this work with footwear was undertaken so early because various organizations - notably the American Posture League, the Women's Foundation for Health, and the Y. W. C. A., as well as numerous manufacturers of approved shoes, had made available information and illustrations which could be used by our field workers. I can not overemphasize the far-reaching influence of such literature.



Fig.3. - Calf-club member with his heifer that won the State championship in Minnesota, 1925



Fig.4.- Morning setting-up exercises at a county club camp. County and State camps provide opportunities for physical examinations, directed exercise, and training in food selection and hygiene



I well remember the day when one of the men club leaders of the Washington Office told how he had recently gone with a county club agent to visit the club boy who raised the pig that had carried off the prize at the county fair. The pig, it seemed, was all that could be desired, but to a discriminating eye the boy was not. He was thin, underweight, stoop shouldered, and narrow chested. On inquiry it transpired that although he had raised his pig on milk, he didn't think much of it for himself, and that his diet was unsatisfactory in other respects as well. When it was pointed out to him that he ought not to let his pig get ahead of him, he was eager to take himself in hand, even if it involved drinking milk and learning to eat vegetables.

That was the beginning. Then and there we formulated the slogan, "Be your own best exhibit," and we began to wonder how we could teach the 4-H club boys and girls to judge themselves against a standard of good growth, good nutrition and good posture, and develop in them the same sense of discrimination, and the same keen interest in turning out a standard product that characterized their other club activities.

We are greatly indebted to Dr. Caroline C. Hedger of the McCormick Memorial Fund, who was helping us in a number of States to arouse interest in child feeding and care through her remarkable talks to parents. One day as she and a group of extension workers stood watching the judging of a class of dairy cattle at a farmers' summer encampment at the Utah Agricultural College, it was decided to draw up a score for the child on the same general plan as that for livestock, and the result of many consultations and much effort was Dr. Hedger's "Score card for parents," published by the McCormick Fund, which Dr. Hedger herself used effectively in public scoring demonstrations, selecting superior children as living models to illustrate her points. We early subscribed to Dr. Hedger's conviction that what was needed

was to build up the "eye-picture" of the optimal child; and this principle may be traced in much of our later work.

Miss Josephine Arnquist, assistant State club leader for Iowa, one of the first to introduce the work on approved shoes, was instrumental in planning the first health contest held at the National 4-H Club Congress in Chicago in December, 1923. This contest was hastily gotten up, and many of the States picked out their contestants en route from the group of State champions who had won trips to Chicago for prowess in various lines of club work. The examinations were conducted by the medical staff of the McCormick Memorial Fund, and the winners, a boy of 17 from Colorado and a girl of 15 from Mississippi scored very high indeed (fig. 5). We have used their pictures ever since to illustrate standards of good growth and good nutrition. The fact that both these young people had always used plenty of milk, fruit and vegetables, lived much in the open air, had plenty of sleep, and that they swam, exercised, worked, played and lived the lives of normal active children has carried its own lesson.

The Chicago health contest created a great deal of interest in extension circles. The fact that both the 1923 prize winners came from States which had held health contests at their short courses or State fairs did not go unnoted by State club leaders (fig. 6). The next year, a much larger number of States held health contests, with a view to picking out contestants and putting them in the best possible shape to compete at Chicago; and, what was of course much more important, with the idea of interesting the club members themselves in having defects corrected and adopting proper food habits and health habits as a means of improving their nutritional condition. The poor condition of some of the members attending the county camps, and the fact that these particular children had very poor food habits, astonished the

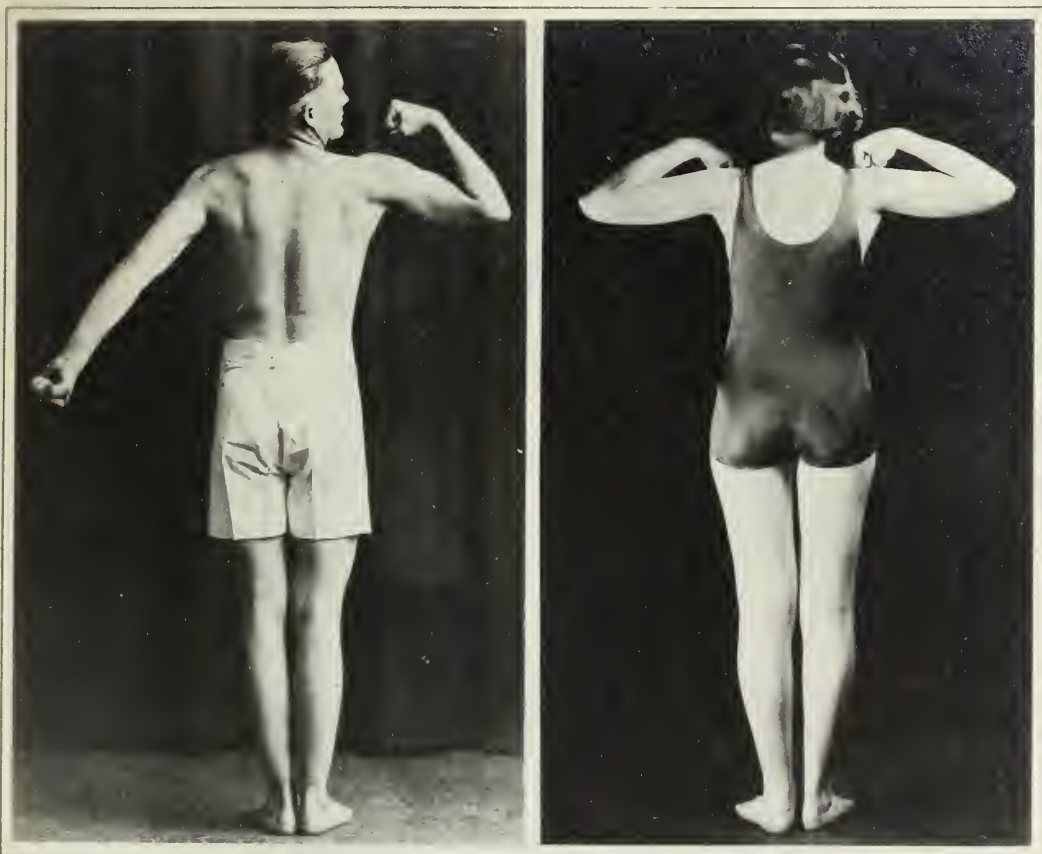


Fig. 5- Colorado boy of 17 and Mississippi girl of 15 who scored highest in the interstate health contest at the annual 4-H-Club Congress in 1923



Fig. 6-Winners in county health contests in Mississippi. Mississippi was one of the first States to provide health examinations for club members

club leaders and made them realize the need for systematic growth work. One State broadcasted as its slogan "Colorado needs more health champions." At the Washington office we developed a tentative "Standard for the 100 per-cent club member," and also made available a food-habits score card based on a daily quota of building and protective foods. In several States, club members were asked to keep this score for a number of days or weeks, and to keep a weight record. Growth work was fairly on its way.

Growth work and health contests brought extension workers into cooperation with their State and county boards of health, which were delighted to advise and to make the physical examinations.

For example, the State Board of Health of South Dakota has, for four years, provided a staff of doctors and nurses to examine the club members attending the club camp at the State fair and the same is true of several other States. Mississippi has an even longer record of cooperation. In 1925, nearly all the 48 States provided more or less thorough physical examinations, together with directed exercises, balanced meals, and some health instructions for club members at camps, short courses, or fairs. For example, the Alabama boys' club leader reported 35 camps attended by 2075 boys from 43 counties, and stated that some form of training for health was given at each camp.

The health contest is good in that it creates interest and furnishes an added incentive toward improvement. No one may qualify for this contest unless he can show that during the year he has maintained good health habits and good food habits. In some States, the idea that the club member himself is an exhibit for club work has taken such hold that no conspicuously underweight youngster is allowed to take part in a county demonstration team. In 1925 a number of States carried on community and county health contests, which came as the

climax of a number of months' work with good food and health habits; and many are the stories quoted in the annual reports of children who made remarkable gains in all directions, so eager were they to do credit to their communities and counties.

The health contest, however, has not yet reached its full usefulness. In its present form, based on physical fitness alone, it fails to give recognition to the handicapped child who has made great improvement but has not been able to overcome his handicaps entirely. A preliminary examination at the beginning of the club period to establish a base line would make it possible to divide the contestants into two classes, one which is in excellent physical condition at the time, and another which must be judged by the improvement made. In a few counties, through the cooperation of local physicians or civic bodies, the two examinations were given last year.

Nevada reported this year that she had studied the blanks in use in other States and found them much too technical for the children themselves to understand, and furthermore, has noted with pain that they sounded the negative rather than the positive note, in that they made deductions for defects instead of giving credits for good points. "We had the temerity, therefore," wrote Miss Stillwell, the assistant director of extension, "to make up a score after the pattern of our livestock judging score. Doubtless we shall wish to revise it, but at least it has the merit of helping the children to understand what to work for."

The Nevada score* is based on a tentative set of points indicating good growth, good nutrition and good posture which we have been using for some time in extension work. These points were most ably demonstrated

* A slight revision of the original Nevada score which is being tested out this year by the Office of Cooperative Extension Work is found on page 9.

TENTATIVE DRAFT OF SCORE CARD FOR GROWTH WORK CONTEST

Based on score used in Nevada in 1925

Scale of points		Perfect score	First scoring	Second scoring
Age.....	Sex.....			
I. GENERAL CONDITION				
1. Good nutritional condition.....	20			
a. Weight within normal range for height and age		5		
b. Muscles firm, sufficient flesh		5		
2 Skin clear, smooth, neither too dry not too moist, good color		3		
3 Tongue clear, uncoated; breath sweet, not offensive		4		
4. Eyes clear, bright, without dark circles or puffiness, mucuous membranes of eyelids bright pink		3		
II. POSTURE - Erect and well balanced....		15		
1. Head erect		2		
2. Back straight, no abnormal curves		3		
3. Shoulders even, not rounded		2		
4. Shoulder blades flat across back		2		
5. Chest high, held somewhat in front of abdomen		3		
6 Weight carried over center of feet		3		
III. BODY.....		20		
1. Chest				
a. Broad, deep, flexible, not muscle bound.		3		
b. Normal shape; no evidences of rickets		2		

Scale of points	Perfect score	First scoring	Second scoring
2. Lungs, good expansion, healthy condition	5		
3. Heart, good circulation	5		
4. Abdomen flat, muscles well developed, no excess of fat	5		
IV. HEAD AND THROAT.....20			
1. Hair, vigorous, clean, scalp healthy	1		
2. Eyes			
a. Lids clean and healthy	1		
b. Vision normal or corrected with glasses	2		
3. Ears, clean, no discharge, hearing normal	3		
4. Nose, no discharge, breathing not obstructed	3		
5. Mouth and teeth			
a. Teeth even, well enameled, free from cavities or properly filled, clean, no tartar	4		
b. Gums, clean, firm, pale pink, no receding	2		
6. Throat, clean, healthy, tonsils not enlarged or diseased, neck glands not enlarged	4		
V. LEGS AND FEET.....10			
1. Legs, straight and strong, no indication of rickets, knees and ankles strong and not enlarged	5		

Scale of points		Perfect score	First scoring	Second scoring
2. Feet, strong and pliable, arches not flattened, toes straight, foot held straight forward, not turned out in walking, no corns, bunions, etc.		5		
VI. ARMS AND HANDS.....	5			
1. Straight, strong, clean and smooth		3		
2. Nails, clean, sensibly trimmed, no nail biting		2		
VII. SELF-CONTROL.....	10			
As indicated by good poise, alert expression, cheerful disposition, no nervous habits, good muscular co-ordination ability to relax and rest		10		
TOTAL.....				

Name.....

P.O. address.....County.....

Name of club.....

Examined by.....Date.....

last year before a group of our State nutrition specialists by Dr. Hugh Chaplin and Miss Harriet Wilde of New York City, using children at different age levels. This training was provided for us through the courtesy of the American Child Health Association, which has undertaken the very important service of working out for the use of nonmedical people, a standard of optimal growth, nutrition and posture which shall have the approval of its advisory committee of pediatricians.

Rhode Island was the first State to demonstrate to the boys and girls assembled at her State club camp the "points" of the club members selected as "health champions." Again through the courtesy of the American Child Health Association, Dr. Richard C. Smith of Boston discussed with the boys and their leaders three selected lads, who by good fortune happened to represent the slender, the medium, and the stocky types respectively (fig. 7). He did the same for the girls, using their three best specimens. This was the beginning of what we hope will become a regular feature of the health contest -- the use of the prize-winning members as illustrative material to help build up the mental picture of optimal growth, nutrition and posture. In 1925 this same State had a booth with a growth-work exhibit at the Eastern States Exposition at Springfield, Mass., and a demonstration team which showed how the Rhode Island club members scored themselves for food and health habits and for certain indications of physical fitness; this team also held office hours in its booth to weigh, measure, and score all and sundry club members who presented themselves (fig. 8).

It is an interesting fact that as soon as we begin to use living models to demonstrate bone growth and nutritional condition, we have to discuss posture standards as well, for the factor that impresses an audience first and most deeply seems to be the way the body is carried. I am growing almost resigned to hearing my demonstrations on standards of growth and nutrition re-



Fig. 7-Boys selected for a demonstration on "The Points of a Well-grown Club Boy," at the Rhode Island State Camp in 1924. From left to right they illustrate respectively, medium, tall and stocky build



Fig. 8-Rhode Island booth and demonstration team of members at Camp Vail, 1925. The team is scoring a club member



ported as "posture demonstrations," and even to finding my pictures and slides labeled as "Posture of So-and-So." Last year Miss Harriet Wilde did us a great service by showing our nutrition specialists the connection between serious postural defects and malnutrition, and urging us to help parents and children recognize a standard of good posture and work to attain it. She was much in demand last summer for similar demonstrations at camps and farmers' meetings. Several States this year have reported posture demonstrations or exhibits put on by club groups.

To summarize: Because it teaches club members to work toward a standard and because it features such characteristic activities as contests, exhibits, team demonstrations, achievements days, and camps, the 4-H club work fostered by the cooperative extension service offers an opportunity for a unique form of health education for adolescents and older boys and girls. We prefer, however, to call this "Growth work" rather than health education, because we want our club members to feel that they have a responsibility to demonstrate to the community modern methods of growing boys and girls, and because we want them to understand that the same fundamental laws of growth that bring them success in their crop and livestock enterprises govern the growth of human beings as well.

Growth work is rapidly gathering headway. The year 1925 saw a widespread attempt to improve the food habits and health habits of club members through the use of a food selection score card; it saw a large number of health examinations at State fairs or State camps, posture being one of the points included. It saw a great deal of work done on proper footwear and corrective exercises for weakened arches, together with several exhibits on this subject at State and county fairs. It saw growth work selected by one State as a subject for exhibit and demonstration at an interstate exposi-

tion, and a demonstration team from a girls' clothing club carry off national honors with its demonstration on "The perfect foot and how to clothe it." It saw State health contests in a majority of the 48 States, carried on in cooperation with State boards of health and culminating in a national contest, judged by the medical staff of the Elizabeth McCormick Memorial Fund at the 4-H Club Congress in Chicago. What is still more important, it saw the health contest working back into the county and the community and motivating the correction of physical defects and poor posture and the formation of good food habits and good health habits. It saw Minnesota adopting a "Let's grow" project which its club members might elect in connection with the standard club activities and Rhode Island, Connecticut and several other States forming health clubs.

In the coming year we expect to continue and enlarge what is best in these activities, and to exercise a still greater influence in the community by developing the demonstrational and exhibit side of the work and setting up for our club members a standard of physical fitness. And this is a work which we believe will have its effect upon their children and their children's children, even unto the third and fourth generation, and will stand as a worthy contribution of the cooperative extension service to the upbuilding of the Nation.

